



Area Chamber of Commerce

February 20, 2002

Mr. Michael Powell, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

02-P26334

01-348

Dear Chairman Powell:

Economic development in Montana in the 21st century means working hard to use every resource at our disposal to help existing businesses grow and encourage new businesses to make Montana their home.

An important resource in that endeavor is broadband internet access. As you know, rural areas have some limitations in that regard that require creative solutions that may not be necessary in more urban markets. Because major portions of our state and even parts of our larger communities like Kalispell are outside the current service area for traditional, fiber or cable based broadband providers, their e-commerce potential relies on their ability to access reliable, affordable broadband access.

I am encouraged by the promise of exactly this kind of increased access that may result from the merger of DirecTV and EchoStar (Docket #01-348). By eliminating the duplication of a large amount of television programming that takes up valuable satellite spectrum, the merged company will be able to significantly add to its current capability to provide the reliable, cost effective broadband internet capability rural communities like ours need to be able to compete in the new economy.

I hope you will consider these benefits as you weigh the pros and cons of this important merger.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe H. Unterreiner".

Joseph H. Unterreiner, President
Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce

CC: The Honorable Max Baucus

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